

TO THE BARNARD CASTLE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Annual Report, 1898.

GENTLEMEN,

I.

During the course of the year 1898 there occurred within the limits of the Urban District Council's area of control 75 deaths. To this number must be added three more, which occurred at Sedgefield Asylum and Durham Workhouse, of persons belonging to Barnard Castle. On the other hand, twelve cases of death were registered in Barnard Castle of persons belonging to foreign districts. In this way the actual number of deaths appears to have been only 66, producing a rate of mortality of 15.20 per 1,000 inhabitants per annum, as per census 1891.

The estimated population, however, of the town, in the middle of July, was ascertained to be 5,060, multiplying the number of inhabited houses by the average number of inmates per inhabited house at the last census. This would further reduce the annual rate of mortality to the very low figure 13.04 per 1,000.

The mortality amongst infants has this year been again increased, 14 deaths having been recorded as occurring under one year of age, that is 3.22 per 1,000 inhabitants (census 1891), or 18.66 per cent. of total deaths, one of these being ascribed to Broncho Pneumonia, one to Diarrhœa, one to Erysipelas, three to Gastro-Enteritis, and the remainder to congenital weakness and other not specially classified disorders. The deaths ascribed to Gastro-Enteritis were mainly caused by injudicious and improper feeding.

I am sorry to say that the infantile death-rate still continues to be too high.

Twenty-seven deaths occurred amongst persons over 65 years of age, the oldest persons being a male and female, each 86 years old. Nine persons exceeded 80 years of life.

Zymotic, or infectious diseases, caused only three deaths, being 4 per cent. of total deaths, and 0.69 per 1,000 of population.

The deaths were ascribed to the following diseases :—

Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	...	...	1 Case
Measles	...	...	...	...	...	1 „
Diarrhœa	...	...	...	...	...	1 „
						—
Total						3 Cases

Diseases of the Respiratory Organs accounted for twenty deaths. Of this number only five were ascribed to Pulmonary Consumption, or three less than during the

preceding year, giving a Phthisis death-rate of 1·15 per 1,000 inhabitants. The rate from all other Lung Diseases is 3·45.

Heart Disease was registered as the cause of the death of thirteen persons.

112 Births were registered during the year.

II.

In considering the rate of sickness, I am sorry to say that it was rather higher than during the preceding year, particularly so during the months of March, April, and May, and again during November and December. During the first-mentioned three months, it was mainly of the nature of Influenza, with accompanying and subsequent Lung Affection, and affecting very disastrously the aged population of the town.

It is, on the other hand, with pleasure that I am able to report a great decrease in notifiable infectious diseases, only four having been brought to my notice during the year. They were as follows:—

Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	...	...	1 Case
Enteric Fever	...	...	...	...	...	2 Cases
Erysipelas	...	...	...	...	...	1 Case
						—
Total						4 Cases

The case of **Scarlet Fever** was that of an infant, under one year of age, and was of so severe a nature as to bring on death in 24 hours. How it originated I found it impossible to determine, especially as no further cases occurred in the house or neighbourhood.

The two cases of **Typhoid Fever** were both of foreign and not local origin. In the one instance, the disease having been contracted in Northallerton; and in the other, at Bishop Auckland. The disease pursued its normal course, and, although the patients were not removed to the infectious hospital, no other cases occurred in the town.

I am sorry again to have to draw attention this year to an extensive outbreak of **Measles** in the town during the last quarter.

The disease first made its appearance amongst the children attending the Roman Catholic School, and from there spread to all other schools in the town (particularly of the infant class), so that it was considered advisable to close some of them. Altogether, probably, 150 cases of Measles came to my knowledge, but there must have been a considerable number more. It is, therefore, very satisfactory to note that only in one instance did the disease terminate fatally.

Diarrhœa occurred, as usual, during the hotter months of the year, especially amongst infants, and proved fatal in one case.

No other infectious disease occurred in sufficient number to call for special mention.

III.

The sanitary condition of the town and the sanitary works have continued to improve.



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There has been efficient and regular inspection, and every defect, whensoever it arose, has been remedied as far as possible.

The Sewage Farm has worked satisfactorily during the year, and we have not had cause to find any fault with the effluent.

In connection with the water supply of the town, I thoroughly inspected its source and conduit, and made certain recommendations as to enclosing the Fountain Head, and relaying certain portions of the pipe track. I am glad to say that my recommendations with regard to the Spring Head have been adopted, and I trust the work carried out.

All dairies and cowsheds have been regularly inspected, but I should like here to urge the Council to pay special attention to this subject, as all through the country a great wave of interest has arisen in the question of Tuberculosis—its origin and spread ; and it has been almost conclusively proved that milk and other similar foodstuffs take a prominent place in the production of this disease, which is the cause of more deaths than all other infectious diseases. Only so recently as the beginning of October last, a sub-committee was appointed by the British Medical Association to enquire into, and report on, what steps should be taken to prevent the spread of Tuberculosis in animals and man. Amongst other recommendations they made the following :—

- (1).—“ Properly qualified men should be appointed as meat inspectors by all Urban District Councils.”
- (2).—“ All local authorities should have power : (*a*) to inspect systematically, or cause to be inspected, all dairies and cowsheds from which milk is sent into their districts, and to exclude the milk if the application of the Tuberculin test to any cow suspected of being tuberculous be refused ; such inspection to be carried out by the Medical Officer of Health, with the assistance of a Veterinary Officer.” (*b*) “ to take samples of milk from any cow or cows.” (*c*) “ to prohibit the entrance of milk into any district if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting it to be tuberculous.”

I fully endorse all these recommendations, and am sure they would materially conduce to the improvement of the health of the town, and increase its reputation as a health resort.

Common lodging-houses have been systematically inspected, and it was found expedient to close one of them in the course of the year, owing to its insanitary and unsafe condition.

No action has been called for with respect to offensive trades, workshops, and factories.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

ALFRED H. SEVIER, M.B.,

Medical Officer of Health.

